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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

8 June 1976

Dear George:

As you know, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board has long been concerned with the quality of National Intelligence Estimates, especially those dealing with the strategic capabilities of the USSR. These Estimates are perhaps the most important products of the Intelligence Community. Every possible step should be taken to continually improve their comprehensiveness, soundness and utility to the President and his senior advisors.

Over the past year, the Board's continuing concern with this subject has been a matter of special interest and resulted in the establishment of an Intelligence Estimates Evaluation Committee chaired by Robert W. Galvin, assisted by Dr. John S. Foster, Jr., Dr. Edward Teller and recently Mr. William Casey. The full Board has discussed its perceptions with the President and Mr. Colby and the Committee has advanced this dialogue with members of your staff responsible for the production of strategic force estimates. We think these discussions have been productive and look forward to sustaining them as we work together toward the common goal of better NIEs.

One recommendation the Board has made, and which its NIE Evaluation Committee has refined, is that an experiment in competitive analysis be undertaken in connection with the production of this year's estimate on Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict: NIE 11-3/8-76. The purpose of the experiment is to generate, from the fragmentary evidence which is available, possible alternative descriptions, explanations and judgments of Soviet activities, capabilities and objectives. We have discussed this experiment with your Deputy for National Intelligence Officers and, in light of those discussions, we jointly propose the following ground rules to guide this experiment.

NSC review completed.

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(1) NIE 11-3/8-76 itself will be prepared by the Intelligence Community in accordance with the work plan developed by the NIO for Strategic Programs. For the purposes of this letter, those working on NIE 11-3/8-76 will be referred to as the "A Team."

(2) In the preparation of this NIE, key uncertainties identified by, and divergent opinions arising within the Intelligence Community will be clearly presented, using techniques of presentation familiar to readers of the Estimate as well as any new techniques the Intelligence Community may find desirable.

(3) In addition, with respect to certain key issues, an experiment in the technique of competitive analysis will be conducted. Candidate issues for this experimental treatment include Soviet ICBM accuracy, low-altitude air defense capabilities, Soviet strategic objectives, etc. Three such issues will be selected by the DCI in consultation with the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

(4) On each of the three issues selected for the experiment, the DCI, in consultation with the NIE Evaluation Committee, will select a "B Team" of appropriate size. The members of the three "B Teams" will be persons inside or outside the Intelligence Community and the Government, who have expert knowledge in the subjects in question, who have (or can be granted) the necessary clearances, but who are not themselves engaged in the production of the NIE.

(5) In their respective areas, each of the three B Teams will work independently of the NIE 11-3/8-76 A Team. Each B Team, however, will be given access to all of the information on its area of concern available to the US Government, i. e., it will have access to the same body of information and data on the issue which it is to address as is available to the A Team. Also, each B Team will adhere to the A Team's production schedule so that the three B Teams' drafts of their respective independent assessments are completed at the same time that the basic estimate (A Team) draft is finished.

(6) Once all drafts are completed, the A Team and the overall managers of the Estimate will be given access to the three B Teams' drafts, and each B Team will be given access to all portions of the basic Estimate draft relating to that B Team's area of concentration.

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(7) Each B Team will then meet with members of the A Team to discuss their respective findings and conclusions. These discussions will not -- repeat not -- be aimed at striking compromises or reaching consensus judgments. Their purpose, instead, will be to ensure that both the A Team and the B Teams are, having been motivated to construct alternatives, compelled to defend their assertions and their use of evidence and analysis before peers equally well versed in the technical details of their respective subjects.

(8) After these discussions, both the A Team and the B Teams will have an opportunity to revise their drafts to the extent that they care to make such revisions.

(9) The three B Teams will then prepare written comments on the portions of the revised basic Estimate draft dealing with their respective areas of concern. Similarly, the A Team will prepare written comments on the three revised B Team drafts.

(10) The entire package -- basic Estimate draft, the three B Team drafts, and the comments of A and B Teams -- will then be studied by, briefed in detail to, and discussed by the National Foreign Intelligence Board, chaired by the DCI. Once again, the purpose of this discussion will not -- repeat not -- be that of effecting compromises or reaching consensus judgments. Instead, it will be to ensure that the evidence and the possible alternatives and analyses of all parties are on the table and open to challenge.

(11) The final Estimate will be issued, as usual, by the DCI. The three B Team submissions will be forwarded with it to selected recipients including the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and the PFIAB. The separate, experimental volume containing these submissions will also reproduce for ready reference the A Team analyses of the same subjects and will contain as well the comments of the A and B Teams on each others' submissions.

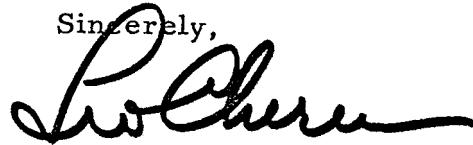
(12) After NIE 11-3/8-76, along with the experimental volume, is forwarded, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, in consultation with the DCI and the PFIAB, will select a panel of senior consumers, civilian and military, to review the experiment and critique its results.

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The cooperation of your principal assistants in this area has been exceptional. The entire Board is impressed with the intensity of their motivation to seek and try out new ways of improving the estimating process and thus the intelligence product which is provided to the national leadership.

Sincerely,



Leo Cherne  
Chairman

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